



Mid-South Plant News
 A Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center Publication

2005 Wildflower Tour

Through the cooperative efforts of the Jamie L. Whitten PMC and the Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission, the 2005 Wildflower Tour was held on June 17th. Beautiful weather, 300 + visitors, and three tour trailers running simultaneously made for a great day to be on-site.

The tour consisted of seven stops, where neighboring agencies conducted lectures on the continuous studies at the PMC. Brian Baldwin from Mississippi State University was at the first site and educated visitors about the collaborative research between NRCS and MSU in the selection and production of native grass species for conservation purposes throughout the Southeast. The second stop was our Agroforestry Alley Cropping Demonstration. NRCS employees Robert Wimbish, Agronomist from the Tupelo Area Office and Alan Holditch, NRCS State Forester spoke on Conservation Practice 311 and the early-planted soybeans located between the stands of green ash and pecan.

The third site was a mixed field of native wildflowers, predominately black-eyed susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and clasping coneflowers (*Dracopis amplexicaulis*). Lynn Libous-Bailey, a biologist from Agricultural Research Service in Stoneville gave an informative presentation on native wildflowers. At the fourth stop, Wayne Porter from MSU spoke on the establishment and management of Mississippi wildflowers. Walter Jackson, NRCS State Grazing Land Specialist and Lynn Ellison, Forester from the Tupelo Area Office teamed up and talked to visitors about the new Silvopasture study that was in our previous newsletter. They explained the practice of combining warm season grasses and pine plantations.



Brian Baldwin (MSU) lectures tour visitors



Black-eyed Susans

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The sixth stop of the tour was the Sunflower Variety and Practice Study site. Kevin Nelms, NRCS Wildlife Biologist at the Greenwood Area Office, gave visitors an account of what the study encompassed. The last stop of the tour included the bamboo harvesting site, which supplies food for Giant Pandas, the main attraction at the Memphis Zoo. Heidi Bissel, a nutritionist, introduced these endangered animals, spoke about their habitat and the importance of the research that is currently being conducted.

While there was much to be seen from the tour trailers, other activities were taking place at the center as well. Susan Harkness and Leila Scott Kelly from MSU, along with George Rowland, Project Coordinator in Tupelo, gave presentations throughout the day on topics relating to landscaping, perennial gardening, and composting. Other engaging activities included an on-site soil and plant disease analysis that was set up by the MSSWCC. Here, visitors could swap a variety of plants and purchase native wildflower seeds from the Commission.

The PMC staff would like to thank all those who participated in this year's tour. We extend our appreciation to Sherry Bennett (SWCD), Steve Cummins (MSU), Janet Grabowski (NRCS), James Moore (NRCS) and Justin Norris (NRCS) for their help in coordinating this tour.



Wayne Porter (MSU) lectures on wildflowers



Heidi Bissel (Memphis Zoo) lectures on Pandas



Visitors at plant swap

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Comings & Goings at the PMC

In the beginning of May, our staff welcomed the arrival of our new secretary, Cassandra Meyer, also known as Cassie. After spending eight years in the Air Force, she started her civilian career with the Forest Service in Oregon. Cassie has a solid background in administration and her skills have been a great addition to our team.

Another major change with the Plant Materials Center was the recent departure of Janet Grabowski, Research Agronomist. She has taken the Manager position at the Brooksville PMC in Brooksville, Florida. Janet first came to our facility in 1991. Her expertise and work ethic have always been an asset to the program here and she will be greatly missed. We wish her much success in her new job. Janet can be reached at the Brooksville PMC at (352) 796-9600 or by e-mail at janet.grabowski@fl.usda.gov.

Sunflowers at the PMC

The 2005 growing season brought a different flower to the PMC . Working with Kevin Nelms, Greenwood Area Wildlife Biologist, a sunflower variety and practice trial plot was planted by the staff. Utilizing one of our production fields that was set aside for a year of crop rotation opened the door for the trial to be implemented at the center. With new herbicides labeled for use in sunflowers as well as a growing number of varieties available, the trial could provide future recommendations concerning wildlife habitat decisions. Four varieties (three hybrids and a peredovick) were chosen for the trial as well as three different herbicide applications. Look for results from the trial in a future issue.





**USDA – NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center
2533 County Road 65 Coffeerville, MS 38922
Phone: 662-675-2588 Fax 662-675-2369

PMC Staff

James Moore - Manager
Cassandra Meyer- Secretary
James Pomerlee – Gardener
Jon Allison – Gardener
Jeremy Burney-Gardener
Christopher Suggs-Gardener
Rodrick Suggs-Gardener
Terry Turner-Gardener

PMC Highlights

April 2005 Planting guide available for Highlander Gamagrass
June 2005 Over 300 visitors attended the Annual Wildflower Tour
September 2005 Lafayette County Master Gardeners toured the PMC

Ask the Expert

Q. What is the difference between no-till and stale seedbed practices?

A. No-till is exactly what it says, no tillage applications between harvest and the next season's crop. Stale seedbed is a practice where tillage is usually done in the fall right behind harvest. Fields or plots would be tilled just as a conventional tilled seedbed would be in the spring. A cover crop would be planted to prevent soil loss during the critical winter months. The cover crop would then be controlled with a "burndown" herbicide just before spring planting. Both no-till and stale seedbed practices are popular because they reduce labor and work time during spring planting. Soil moisture is also conserved.

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